

Venerable Henriette Delille Artist Statement

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Henriette Delille's portrait is centered on her biracial identity; the contrasting white and Black hands in the portrait illustrate this duality. The light-skinned hand and dark-skinned hand reaching for each other represent her efforts for multiracial community through her attempt at an interracial sisterhood (that was ended by an 1830 law that defined interracial groups as illegal; she later founded the Afro-Creole and Black Catholic sisterhood, the Sisters of the Holy Family, alongside Juliette Gaudin and Mother Josephine Charles) and in her work with all those in poverty, the elderly, the sick, and the uneducated.¹⁵

The hands in the "hands up, don't shoot" positioning (widely known after the shooting of Michael Brown, and used as a chant in Black Lives Matter protests) emphasizes that solidarity requires white people to stand with the Black community not only when it is comfortable or popular, but especially when it is challenging, and destructive to white privilege.¹⁶ Using this modern phrase in Delille's context is meant to reinforce that the interracial community that Delille and her colleagues struggled to achieve is the same interracial solidarity that white people are called to continuously work toward by dismantling their own white privilege and the system of racism at large in today's society. Finally, the hands from the sky, opened towards the sacred heart, portray the Holy Family as a reference to the Sisters of the Holy Family.

The FutureChurch resource packet for Venerable Henriette Delille can be found here:
<https://www.futurechurch.org/women-witnesses-for-racial-justice-downloads>

¹⁵ "VENERABLE HENRIETTE DELILLE," Henriette Delille, 2018,
<https://www.henriette-delille.com/henriette-delille>;

Shannen Dee Williams, "Black Catholic Women are Forgotten Prophets of American Democracy," Black Perspectives, March 2, 2021,
<https://www.aaihs.org/black-catholic-women-are-forgotten-prophets-of-american-democracy/>.

¹⁶ Matthew Alemu, "Solidarity is not acknowledging your white privilege, but relinquishing it," Detroit Free Press, July 7, 2020,
<https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/contributors/2020/07/07/solidarity-not-acknowledging-your-white-privilege-but-relinquishing/5375261002/>.